

CALFED Public Hearing
September 1, 1999

Good evening! My name is Ellen Sanders Way and I, like all of you, am a consumer of the food that is grown throughout the State of California. I am also the daughter of a Central Valley dairy farmer and the wife of a produce grower and shipper in the Coachella Valley, I believe strongly that the reason agriculture is considered a threat to the state's ecological health and water supply is because we have not properly educated the public about how agriculture benefits each and every resident of this great state. There isn't one person in this room tonight who doesn't eat food grown in California. As urban consumers, we must provide farmers with the necessary resources to continue to grow the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food supply in the world.

I am here tonight to express my concerns about the CALFED Draft EIS/EIR and the detrimental impacts it will have on growing food in California. I have come to this urban setting because it most clearly demonstrates how urban growth without the protection of resources will eliminate food production in California.

As I understand the process, CALFED is to address four critical problems with the Bay-Delta System. However, in your draft plan, ecosystem restoration clearly out weights the other critical problems, which severely impact people. Why is it that in your Ecosystem Restoration Program, which is listed with highest priority, that supporting sustainable populations of diverse and valuable plant and animal species is more important than increasing our water storage capability so that people won't continue to lose valuable rainfall? I think if you asked the citizens of California if they would rank the needs of an endangered species over the needs of people, they would choose people. Whether we want to face it or not, California's population is going to increase and reducing our water supply is not going to stop growth, it is just going to lower the quality of life for all of us.

Farmers depend, more than anyone, on a healthy environment. We can't grow food on land that is not rich with nutrients or water that is not clean and abundant. We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously, without a healthy environment we can't grow food. We don't want to see houses built on the most abundant soil in the world. Nor do we want to see the CALFED plan retire valuable farmland, when we should be protecting farmland.

Another point of concern is with the insistence that this plan encompass 30 years. There are too many unknowns about what California will be like in 30 years. This document is based on assumptions about population growth, habitat needs, water needs, etc... We need to see the criteria that will be used to evaluate solutions to the Bay-Delta, and they need to be based on sound science not exaggerated guesses.

The next time you go into the grocery store, just take a moment to think about how much you and your family depend upon California agriculture. If we don't make major changes to the current CALFED plan you can be certain that more and more of our food will be coming from foreign lands – is that what we want for future generations? I think not.

Thank you for being here tonight and considering my comments.